



**Baltimore Woods
Nature Center**

Nature in your hands

Master Interpretive Plan 2009





Baltimore Woods Nature Center

Nature in your hands

Master Interpretive Plan

February 2009

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| • Introduction | |
| ○ Interpretive Planning Overview..... | 4 |
| ○ The 5 M Model..... | 4-5 |
| ○ Purpose of This Plan..... | 6 |
| ○ How To Use This Plan..... | 7 |
| • Management Goals | |
| ○ Mission..... | 8 |
| ○ Vision..... | 8 |
| ○ Goals and Objectives..... | 9-20 |
| • Messages | |
| ○ Central Theme..... | 21 |
| ○ Subthemes and Storylines..... | 21-22 |
| • Markets | |
| ○ Marketing Plan Overview | |
| ▪ Objectives..... | 23 |
| ○ Audiences | |
| ▪ External | |
| • Active..... | 24 |
| • Passive..... | 25 |
| ▪ Internal..... | 26-27 |
| ▪ Future..... | 28 |
| ○ Action Steps..... | 28 |
| • Mechanics | |
| ○ Criteria for New Site Selection..... | 29 |
| ○ Site Development Considerations..... | 29 |
| ○ Site Development Guidelines..... | 30 |
| ○ The BWNC Experience..... | 30 |
| ○ Action Steps..... | 31 |
| • Media | |
| ○ Program Categories..... | 32 |
| ○ Untapped Opportunities..... | 33 |
| ○ Guidelines for Media Selection..... | 35 |
| ○ Guidelines for Personal Program Design..... | 35 |
| ○ Guidelines for Non-personal Media..... | 36 |
| ○ Media Evaluation..... | 36 |
| ○ Action Steps..... | 37 |
| • Action Plan | |
| ○ Phase 1 (1-3 years)..... | 39 |
| ○ Phase 2 (3-5 years)..... | 42 |
| ○ Phase 3 (5+ years)..... | 44 |
| • Appendix | |
| ○ The Planning Process | |
| ○ History of BWNC | |
| ○ 2007 Bolger and Battle Marketing Plan | |
| ○ Survey Questions | |
| ○ ADVANS Business Plan | |

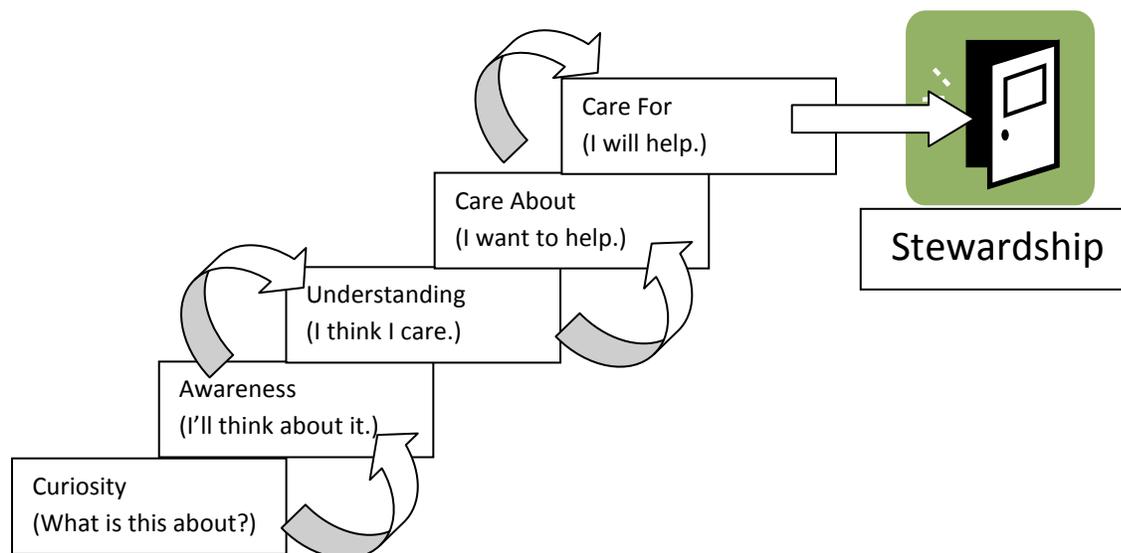
Baltimore Woods Nature Center (BWNC) has been serving the Central New York community through nature education and awareness for 42 years. Based in Marcellus, NY, it is a non-profit organization which is not supported by government funds. BWNC's operational expenses rely on donations, grants, program fees, fund raisers, and a loyal membership. The organization is governed by a board of directors. Day to day operations are run by a staff of seven full-time and two part-time employees.

Baltimore Woods Nature Center is headquartered at Baltimore Woods, a 182 acre nature preserve primarily owned by Save the County Land Trust (STC). STC maintains interest in managing the property according to BWNC's needs. The preserve has six miles of hiking trails, open to the public year round. The trails wind through an abandoned cattle farm in various stages of succession. Baltimore Brook has cut a steep valley through layers of sand and clay. Baltimore Woods has many small streams, springs, a frog pond, and wetlands. Human improvements include a replica pioneer log cabin, a pavilion, and the John Weeks Interpretive Center. The property is long known as a birding destination in Central New York.

Marcellus is a suburb of the City of Syracuse, therefore BWNC draws many of its audiences from the city. Currently, BWNC delivers its award-winning Nature in the City program to eleven elementary schools throughout the city school district. This program seeks to bring urban youth to their local green spaces, to provide natural science education. Syracuse has many fine parks, but BWNC's efforts focus on those that are closest to the schools it serves. Elmwood Park, in particular, has many of the natural resources necessary to provide an ideal outdoor classroom. BWNC hopes to work with the Syracuse City Parks District to develop a community nature center in, or near, a city park within the next 5 years.

Introduction to Interpretive Planning

The National Association for Interpretation defines “interpretation” as “a communication process that forges intellectual and emotional connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.” The interpretive process of communication seeks to go beyond simply imparting knowledge. When carefully approached, interpretation moves individuals along a continuum that begins with simple curiosity about a resource, to a place of stewardship for that resource.



Baltimore Woods Nature Center exists to deliver a message of thoughtful environmental stewardship to the people of Central New York. BWNC wishes to bring about transformations in individuals and communities that result in better stewardship of the environment. This will happen through thoughtful communication and experiences that form emotional connections to our natural resources.

Interpretive Planning, as defined by Lisa Brochu¹, is “a thoughtful process that blends management needs and resource considerations with visitor desire and ability to pay to determine the most effective way to deliver messages in support of the organization’s mission.” To simplify, interpretive planning will help BWNC focus interpretive efforts (programs, publications, exhibits, etc.) to increase positive impacts and decrease wasted effort.

This process takes into account every aspect of nature center operations, and presents options for aligning efforts to support the message. In Lisa Brochu’s model for interpretive planning, these aspects are organized into five categories: Management, Messages, Markets, Mechanics, and Media.

Management refers to the needs of the administration, including the organization’s mission, vision, and goals. It accounts for the strategic business plan, site resources, and land management.

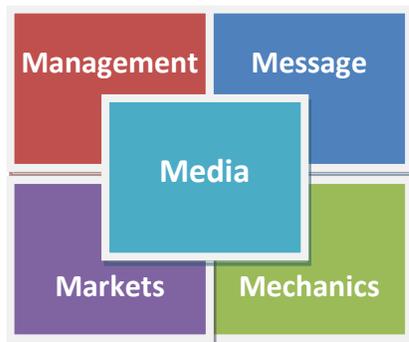
¹*Interpretive Planning: The 5 M Model for Successful Planning Projects*, Lisa Brochu, Interp Press 2003

Messages are the ideas that BWNC wants to share with the people of Central New York. These are the themes and stories behind all interpretive efforts.

Markets are the audiences for BWNC's message. These are visitors, program attendees, day campers, members, donors, business partners, etc.

Mechanics refers to the visitor experience, and seeks to unite the entire experience visually, intellectually, and emotionally.

Media refers to the actual interpretive efforts. This includes programs, brochures, exhibits, self-guided trails, and events.



The 5 M model for Interpretive Planning

Management: Mission, Vision, goals and objectives

Message: Central Themes and storylines

Markets: Target audiences

Mechanics: Visitor experience

Media: Programs, exhibits, brochures, etc. Media is supported and firmly grounded in the other four M's.

Purpose of This Plan

This Master Interpretive Plan will:

- Provide the foundation for two site specific plans, one each for Baltimore Woods and an urban center within the City of Syracuse.
- Focus the many facets of the organization to communicate a powerful and relevant message to the CNY market.
- Unite interpretive messages across platforms and communications media.
- Serve as the road map toward achieving some of the goals put forth by the strategic business plan.
- Direct efforts efficiently so that the allocation of scarce resources can have maximum impact.
- Lay the groundwork for any future opportunities throughout Central New York.

Why Now?

The Baltimore Woods site has a strong market in nature day campers, but is underutilized in other areas, especially local school programming and youth organizations. There is a need for a new land management plan, for which Save the County Land Trust has expressed the desire to manage the property based on BWNC's needs. Visitors have expressed interest in programs and services not currently provided. Many of the facilities are in need of repair or upgrades that should be informed by an interpretive plan. Implementation of the new branding guidelines throughout interpretive media also needs to be addressed. Interpretive planning will provide strategies for meeting these needs, and help target programming where it will be most effective.

Today, BWNC is expanding rapidly in new and exciting directions. The Nature in the City program has opened a wealth of opportunities within the City of Syracuse. The plans for developing a facility within Syracuse will provide a chance for the organization to realize its new mission of "transforming individuals and communities through place based education" within the city limits. This bold mission requires a shift from the current roving approach (program on wheels) to establishing a physical presence in Syracuse neighborhoods where nature centers could eventually develop. Many of the goals presented within this plan can be implemented within Syracuse communities as transitional steps toward establishing a physical site. Doing so will provide a strong foundation of support for creating a community nature center. A thoughtful and well written plan will give strategic guidance to this process. If successful, expanding BWNC's influence to other communities around CNY could be a very real possibility.

Over the years, BWNC has accomplished quite a bit with very little. As a private not-for-profit, there is no reliable source of steady income. Resources are scarce, and they always have been. As BWNC continues to grow, this Master Plan will help direct efforts efficiently so that the allocation of scarce resources can have maximum impact.

How to Use This Plan

This Master Interpretive Plan has two intended uses. The first being a guide to aide the decision making process. The second is to provide a series of suggestions and action steps to help direct our interpretive efforts over the next few years.

The decision making process is really very simple. The plan is organized into a series of M's: Management (goals and objectives), Messages, Markets, Mechanics, and Media. Each of these categories provides a set of filters for aiding decision makers. Whenever a question arises as to whether or not to pursue a project (programs, site development, or other interpretive Media), the project must pass through these filters:

- **Management** – Is this project on mission, financially fundable, sustainable? Does it meet management goals? Will it have positive impacts on the resource or for the organization?
- **Messages** – Does the project promote a personal connection to nature and a sense of stewardship? Is it relevant to our organizational themes and storylines?
- **Markets** – Is there an audience for this project? What are they willing to pay? How will it be advertised?
- **Mechanics** – Are there existing site resources for this project? In the case of site or facility upgrades, does the project have any programmatic opportunities? Will it improve the visitor experience?
- **Media** – Does it meet our standards for interpretation? Are we already doing this project? Has it been tried before and how successful was it?

If the project passes these filters, or at least doesn't detract from any of these areas, then it should be pursued. However, if it falls short in any given category, careful thought should be made as to the next steps. It may be that with the right revisions, the project can meet these standards; if not, then it should be abandoned. There is no particular hierarchy for the filters, each is equally important.

This plan also lays out a series of suggested action steps, where necessary, to direct developmental efforts. These can be found at the end of each section, and are summarized at the end of the plan.

Management Goals and Objectives

“Management” refers to BWNC administration and the Board of Directors. In addition to identifying the mission and vision of BWNC, this section will identify major goals and objectives the organization wants to achieve over the next several years. Goals are broken down into objectives, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. *Outputs* are the efforts that BWNC will put forth. *Outcomes* are those things that the audience of the output will do as a result of the contact. *Impacts* are the positive results of the effort on the natural environment, the sites BWNC maintains, or for BWNC itself. Many of these ideas are repeated in greater detail throughout the rest of this Master Interpretive Plan. Several objectives will be integrated into site specific interpretive plans to be developed for Baltimore Woods and a Syracuse platform in the future.

Mission

Baltimore Woods Nature Center transforms individuals and communities through place-based education. This transformation is achieved through frequent positive experiences that cultivate a sense of wonder.

The staff, board, and volunteers are passionate about Baltimore Woods Nature Center (BWNC) and the enduring values of the core mission. These values include:

- A sense of wonder and awe for the natural environment
- Stewardship of the environment
- Connecting people to the environment
- Awareness and knowledge through high quality interpretation
- Awareness and knowledge for all ages but with a particular focus on children
- Hands-on experience (Nature in your hands)
- Experiencing the environment everywhere “Right here, right now”
- Respect, camaraderie, and honesty among those involved with BWNC

Vision

Baltimore Woods Nature Center is a premier educational organization that transforms individuals and communities by cultivating a personal connection to, and an abiding love for the natural world. BWNC serves as a model of sensible stewardship of nature for generations to come.

Goals

Goal 1 - Provide safe natural areas for communities to develop connections to the natural world.

Objective 1.1: Provide activities for communities that promote positive and safe use, stewardship, and a sense of connection to natural areas.

Outputs:

- a) Schedule programs or events for families and/or adults every weekend, with the exception of holiday weekends
- b) Develop programs that encourage the use of trail systems for nature study as well as mental, spiritual, and physical fitness
- c) Promote community events that encourage positive site usage (i.e.; festivals, galas, interest groups)
- d) Hold multiple volunteer events each year that invite families, scouts, businesses, and community groups to participate in stewardship projects

Outcomes:

- Facilities are consistently utilized in positive and educational ways by children, families and adults from the community
- Community members build a personal connection with specific sites and the organization

Impact:

- Sites are transformed as vandalism, crime, and other negative uses decrease
- Students become more invested in the organization, bringing family back to the site, aiding in word of mouth marketing, and volunteering to help with programs and maintenance of the site
- Families and adults invest more of their time, energy, and money to sustain the organization and maintain facilities

Objective 1.2: Increase the use of hiking trails and other appropriate recreational opportunities at all sites

Outputs:

- a) Teams of land management and garden volunteers meet regularly to participate in stewardship projects
- b) Design designated play areas to provide safe and inviting nature play opportunities for children
- c) Develop incentive programs that encourage the use of established trail systems for physical fitness

Outcomes:

- Increased use of facilities and trails by community members
- Community members engage in outdoor recreation activities that provide increased physical and mental health benefits

Impacts:

- Negative site use will decrease as a result of providing positive use alternatives
- Each site gains a reputation as a safe place to recreate and connect with the natural world
- An increase in users translates into an increase in potential supporters

Objective 1.3: Have all year-round employees certified in CPR for the Professional Rescuer and First Aid: Responding to Emergencies (or equivalent)

Outputs:

- a) Annual CPR for the Professional Rescuer and First Aid: Responding to Emergencies training opportunities paid and provided for all year-round staff

Outcomes:

- All year-round staff obtains certification in CPR for the Professional Rescuer and First Aid: Responding to Emergencies
- Participants in programs and volunteer opportunities have an increased sense of safety while attending BWNC events

Impacts:

- Staff members are better prepared to handle any situation requiring CPR or First Aid.
- Positive perception of the organization as being safety conscious leads to increased community support for BWNC

Objective 1.4: Develop systems to assess and manage safety issues at sites, and in transit for programming

Outputs:

- a) Staff and Board of Directors develop a Safety Plan
- b) Create permission slip for walking field trip participants to travel to local parks during school hours

Outcomes:

- Participants will fill out required and relevant legal forms before participating in BWNC programs with identified risks

Impact:

- No audience member is hurt during programming, or on transit to programs (e.g. schoolchildren being led from their school to a local park by BWNC employees)
- In the event of an accident, BWNC's exposure to significant financial losses due to legal action is minimized

Goal 2 - Provide a community resource for environmental education and involvement within the communities where nature centers are based

Objective 2.1: Create a neighborhood nature center(s) in Syracuse that offers quality environmental education opportunities

Outputs:

- a) Include spaces that invite learning about the natural world (libraries, computer stations, wildlife observation decks, interactive exhibits) in the creation of new nature centers
- b) Incorporate high quality interpretive exhibits and trail signage at maintained sites
- c) Offer summer camp and school vacation camp programs at appropriate sites
- d) Develop afterschool programs for neighborhood children
- e) Develop on-site school programs that are designed to meet NYS standards in science, as well as to offer unique experiences for students and teachers
- f) Hold lecture series events for adults

Outcomes:

- Families and adults attend programs and volunteer regularly
- Children engage in nature play activities
- Students learn about science in local parks through hands-on/minds-on activities

Impacts:

- BWNC gains a reputation of operating premier environmental education facilities
- More donors invest in these premier facilities
- Individuals and groups participate in more programs and events, increasing program revenue
- Increased participation through repeat visitors leads an increased sense of ownership and an increased community transformation
- More schools commit to providing stable funding for school programs
- The areas in which BWNC works are transformed into more environmentally and economically vibrant communities

Objective 2.2: Increase involvement and visibility in the local communities where nature centers are based

Outputs:

- a) Participate in community wide events
- b) Partner with a diverse group of local businesses and community groups to support large programs and events

Outcomes:

- Volunteers from the community will help develop and advertise large events
- Community organization partners will be involved in the planning, marketing, and execution of programs and events
- Community members will attend programs and events offered by BWNC and encounter BWNC at community wide events

Impacts:

- BWNC visibility and recognition will increase
- Program/event attendance and income will increase as the community becomes more aware of BWNC's activities
- Volunteerism will increase as community members are provided a way to get involved
- Support will increase as more of the community experiences the BWNC mission
- Partnerships will multiply marketing impacts and divide the costs

Objective 2.3: Provide numerous and diverse opportunities for people of all ages to have meaningful involvement with the organization

Outputs:

- a) Refine volunteer recruitment and coordination to keep pace with the organizational growth
- b) Clearly define roles for community members to volunteer as a part of the office management, land management, or program teams
- c) Create committees of staff and volunteers to assist in the development, marketing, and execution of all large programs and events
- d) Develop programs that educate volunteers on the BWNC mission and activities
- e) Develop a community of philanthropists that can participate through financial donations

Outcomes:

- Volunteers efficiently aid BWNC by fulfilling well defined and clearly articulated roles
- Volunteers contribute to various committees that match their interests and skills
- Donors will offer financial support for projects or for the organization as a whole

Impacts:

- The number of volunteer hours will increase
- Volunteers pleased with their experience at BWNC and educated in its mission become spokespersons for the organization, aid in word-of-mouth marketing, and encourage friends to volunteer with BWNC
- Financial support from donors will increase

Objective 2.4: Program management and volunteer coordination intentionally facilitates intergenerational mentoring opportunities

Outputs:

- a) Design school and afterschool programs to be completed in series, where each program builds on the last visit, and students work with the same educator throughout the series, whenever possible
- b) Conduct informal programs (weekend walks, citizen science projects, community events) in neighborhoods where school and afterschool programs are also being conducted
- c) Pair experienced program, office management, and land management volunteers with community youth during volunteer projects
- d) BWNC staff members will work alongside youth groups doing service projects at BWNC sites
- e) Develop a series of programs for teenagers that include service projects
- f) Create volunteer opportunities that include youth in the development, marketing, and execution of programs and events
- g) Train teenagers to volunteer as camp Counselors-In-Training

Outcomes:

- Students build a relationship with the site, staff, and organization through multiple visits
- Youth build mentoring relationships with BWNC staff
- More experienced volunteers pass on to younger volunteers their knowledge of and connection to both the natural world and BWNC
- Youth looking for or needing guidance are mentored while being included in meaningful volunteer opportunities
- Area students are able to fulfill volunteer hour requirements from schools

Impacts:

- Youth become more invested in the organization, bringing family back to the site, aiding in word of mouth marketing, and volunteering to help with programs and maintenance of the site
- Overall volunteer hours increase
- Sites are transformed as vandalism, crime, and other negative uses decrease

Goal 3 - Promote awareness and knowledge of the natural world through high quality interpretive media

Objective 3.1: Create site specific interpretive plans for Baltimore Woods and Syracuse platforms

Outputs:

- a) This Master Interpretive Plan serves as the foundation for creating platform specific plans

Outcomes:

- Visitors receive consistent messages and have similar positive experiences at every site

Impacts:

- Sites are revitalized or created with thoughtfulness that will ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively

Objective 3.2: Have one staff member be certified by NAI as a Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT)

Outputs:

- a) BWNC provides support for a full time educator to attend CIT training

Outcomes:

- One fulltime employee will become a CIT, and conduct training of education staff and program volunteers

Impacts:

- Trained educators will be able to develop and conduct programs in a consistent and professional manner
- A volunteer naturalist corps can be created to assist with programming, and roving naturalist roles

Objective 3.3: Have all educators take the National Association for Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course and achieve certification

Outputs:

- a) BWNC provides support for educators to attend CIG training

Outcomes:

- Educators become certified Interpretive Guides

Impacts:

- Programs are developed and conducted in a consistent and professional manner

Objective 3.4: Develop the website to include educational materials

Outputs:

- a) Develop fund support mechanisms for putting educational materials on the website
- b) Education staff creates a series of educational media for the website that focuses on natural history, outdoor recreational activities, and that encourages users to visit our facilities
- c) Education staff maintains a weekly blog in the form of a nature journal about Central New York

Outcomes:

- Visitors to the website experience BWNC messages at their convenience
- Website visitors utilize these educational materials as a reference for learning more about CNY natural history

Impacts:

- The website becomes another platform of BWNC, connecting new audiences to the messages and mission
- BWNC's reputation for quality education and interpretation grows
- On-site visitation increases, thus increasing opportunities for meaningful personal contacts

Objective 3.5: Promote networking and professional development among BWNC staff

Outputs:

- a) Educational staff attends NAI and NYSOEA conferences and workshops every year
- b) Program Manager and Executive Director attend ANCA summit each year
- c) Encourage other non-program staff to seek out professional development opportunities
- d) Obtain and maintain organizational membership in NAI, NYSOEA, and ANCA

Outcomes:

- Conference attendees gain new ideas for programming and administration practices.
- Conference attendees relate their experiences and ideas to other members of BWNC
- Educators read the newsletters, journals and magazines published by the professional organizations

Impacts:

- New ideas and refreshed staff will keep BWNC moving forward in positive directions

- Staff members will grow professionally, increasing the quality and effectiveness of interpretive efforts, and the support mechanisms for those efforts.

Goal 4 - Work with local schools and organizations to provide curriculum based on the natural sciences

Objective 4.1: Revitalize and design all school programs to be developmentally appropriate and meet mandated science standards for specific grade level audiences

Outputs:

- a) Hold focus group meetings with school teachers and curriculum liaisons to obtain input on audience needs for science based programming
- b) Feedback from curricular liaisons is used to re-align school program curriculum with teacher needs
- c) Programs that are not science based are re-aligned or cut from the school program curriculum
- d) Grade level programs are designed in series, with the connected themes that build off of each other
- e) Unique programs are designed for each grade level
- f) Prop bins and write-ups for each program are developed by the end of the 2009-2010 school year

Outcomes:

- Students demonstrate an increased enthusiasm for science
- Students and teachers develop a personal connection to local nature and BWNC
- Teachers observe the added value of BWNC school programs

Impacts:

- Increased enthusiasm among students for science may lead to an increase in test scores on science topics in the standardized tests
- Teachers encourage school administrators and PTA's to continue funding for field trips to BWNC sites
- BWNC gains a reputation for providing strong science education and garners more support from donors
- Students bring families back to programs and events, increasing community involvement and earned income
- Students with a personal connection to and scientific understanding of neighborhood nature become advocates for nature and assist in maintenance of sites
- Students choose science related career paths

Goal 5 – Set an example of stewardship in the natural areas we utilize by helping to protect and revitalize them

Objective 5.1: Work with Save the County to create a new Land Management Plan for Baltimore Woods

Outputs:

- a) Create an interpretive plan for Baltimore Woods that will help inform the Land Management Plan
- b) Perform flora, fauna, and habitat survey of Baltimore Woods
- c) BWNC Land Management Committee will work with STC to create a new land management plan
- d) Inform land management volunteers on the new plans goals and methods

Outcomes:

- Land Manager and volunteers will implement the land management plan
- STC includes BWNC input in development of a new land management plan

Impacts:

- Land Management and interpretation goals will align
- Important species and habitats will be protected

Objective 5.2: Develop interpretive media to educate visitors about land management decisions and practices at all sites.

Outputs:

- a) Undergo sign needs assessments at all sites as part of developing site specific interpretive plans
- b) Create interpretive signage where appropriate
- c) Develop a land management guided walk to showcase management practices in effect

Outcomes:

- Visitors will read signs located near key management areas
- Visitors will attend walks

Impacts:

- Visitors will become volunteers to aid in land management work
- People will donate materials, money, or other resources to help protect natural areas
- Visitors will be inspired and equipped to be stewards of nature in their own backyards and neighborhoods

Goal 6 - Provide interpretation in ways that are sustainable in both finances and human resources

Objective 6.1: Develop targeted marketing plans for each operating platform

Outputs:

- a) Hold focus group meetings with key audience groups
- b) Create targeted marketing plans based on audience input
- c) Integrate these marketing plans into site specific interpretive plans

Outcomes:

- Meeting attendees will provide input on programming interests, perceived value, and give suggestions for increasing that value

Impacts:

- Programs will become more financially stable over time
- Program attendance will increase

Objective 6.2: Develop a comprehensive program management plan that includes a strategy to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate all personal programs (assigned to new Program Manager)

Objective 6.3: Create and implement a multifaceted system to continuously monitor audience desire for programming

Outputs:

- a) Develop and hone program evaluations for camp, NITC, on-site school, public programs, and group programs
- b) Hold annual meetings and seasonal evaluations with school teachers to determine curriculum effectiveness
- c) Include formative evaluations in the design of school programs

Outcomes:

- Audience members will fill out evaluation cards after each program that includes space to identify future program ideas
- At least one teacher from each school regularly involved with BWNC's school programming is invited to become a curricular liaison and attend annual meetings
- Children give feedback through formative evaluations as a part of school programs
- Teachers fill out evaluations given to them after the conclusion of school programs
- Curriculum Liaisons submit seasonal evaluation of program success and curricular relevance
- Community group members contribute market needs while participating in annual focus groups

Impacts:

- As a result of implementing programs based on audience feedback, program attendance and income will increase
- Shifting dependence from grant income to more earned income for NITC

Objective 6.4: Create a group of trained volunteers to assist with programming needs

Outputs:

- a) Design Volunteer Naturalist programs to provide training for volunteer educators and roving naturalists

Outcomes:

- Volunteers will assist paid educators with program preparation and delivery
- Volunteer roving naturalists will interact with hikers on the trails, interpreting the site and enforcing trail rules

Impacts:

- Overburden on program staff during peak periods will be lightened
- Site misuse (vandalism, drug and alcohol use, etc) will be reduced

Objective 6.5: Increase internship opportunities with area colleges and universities

Outputs:

- a) Refine and implement intern program to include training, practice and evaluation of interns throughout the year
- b) Partner with local college and university education programs to solicit interns

Outcomes:

- Interns will aid with program preparation and delivery
- Interns will design and construct exhibits and other non-personal media

Impacts:

- Overburden on program staff will be lightened
- Real-world interpretive experiences will help students grow into better interpreters
- Non-personal media development will get the required attention

Objective 6.6: Cultivate a group of qualified Contract Naturalists to provide additional programming

Outputs:

- a) Recruit qualified individuals

Outcomes:

- Contract Naturalists provide special programs
- Contract Naturalists will fill in when regular paid staff is unavailable

Impacts:

- Overburden on program staff will be lightened

Master Interpretive Plan Themes and Storylines

BWNC uses place-based education to bring about transformations in individuals and communities. Education is simply a communication process. Effective communication presents unified ideas that support a central message, or theme. The central theme, subthemes, and storylines that follow will help educators and other staff to present a consistent message to all audiences.

Central Theme: A positive personal connection to nature inspires a sense of wonder, and responsible stewardship.

1. Childhood Benefits

The benefits of connections to nature throughout childhood cannot be overestimated.

- a. Time spent engaging in “Nature Play” has important developmental benefits for growing children.
- b. Frequent positive nature experiences develop an emotional connection to the environment which leads to responsible stewardship in adulthood.
- c. Engaging in nature study throughout childhood cultivates a strong sense of place.
- d. Children can learn about ethical human/nature interactions through their experiences while out of doors.
- e. First hand observation helps children understand their role in ecosystems.

2. Sustainable Lifestyle

“Living well” means leaving the planet in good shape for future generations.

- a. In every decision, it is important to consider the impact on future generations.
- b. There are many simple things people can do everyday to help the environment and lessen their ecological footprint.
- c. Dollars spent on locally produced goods and services strengthen a community's economy and "cost less" in terms of environmental degradation.
- d. Home and community gardening are rewarding activities that are both healthy for you and the planet.
- e. Muscle-powered transportation helps you keep fit and is easier on the planet's resources

3. Community Interactions

A healthy relationship to nearby nature is essential to healthy human and natural communities.

- a. From countryside to cityscape, we can experience nature all around us.
- b. Citizen science opportunities allow nature enthusiasts to be a part of real scientific research and conservation efforts right in their own backyards or local parks.
- c. Learning to understand the local ecology of your area will help to build a sense of place and bring you closer to the natural world.

4. Health Benefits

Time spent in nature nurtures our minds, spirits, and bodies.

- a. Activities that tap into nature’s rhythms (gardening, maple sugaring, being a tree steward, etc.) can help to center your mind and provide balance and inner peace.

- b. Outdoor recreation has many benefits for personal health, including physical fitness and clearing your mind.
- c. Taking time to study the ways of nature provides insight into ways to live our own lives.
- d. Nature provides endless subjects to help people explore artistic interests.
- e. Nature provides solace from the everyday hustle of busy lives.

5. Cultural Understanding

The natural and cultural history of Central New York reveals the need for responsible land use.

- a. Just as landscapes change over time, so do cultures and their relationships to the land.
- b. The Baltimore Woods property showcases much of the natural and cultural history of this area.
- c. The partnership between Baltimore Woods Nature Center, Save the County Land Trust, and many other organizations and individuals throughout CNY demonstrates positive human impacts on the land.
- d. As centers of commerce, urban areas have historically been points of introduction for non-native species, which often aggressively compete with native plants and animals for resources.
- e. Onondaga Lake and Onondaga Creek tell a story of the power of humans to damage and rebuild environments.
- f. Nine Mile Creek, as a healthy waterway, demonstrates the benefits of people having a healthy relationship with the land.
- g. Syracuse city parks have a rich cultural and natural history.

6. Scientific Literacy

Children who learn science concepts through hands-on activities in the outdoors deepen their personal connection to nature.

- a. The most effective way for school children to learn science concepts is through thoughtful activities that involve the manipulation of real materials in a natural setting.
- b. Learning to understand the complexities of natural systems helps children gain perspective on their own place in those systems.
- c. Schoolyards, parks, and playgrounds can become real world laboratories for scientific investigation.
- d. Students who learn through engaging lessons in outdoor environments achieve higher test scores and have less behavioral and attendance issues.

7. Urban Conservation

Because cities contain high concentrations of people, it is essential to the global conservation movement that urban populations connect to the natural world.

- a. Urban populations can forge personal connections with the surprising diversity of nature in the city.
- b. Ecological forces are at work in urban environments, just as in rural and suburban settings.
- c. A connection to the natural world will help urban populations revitalize the natural and cultural communities in the city.
- d. Simple conservation efforts to create even small urban green spaces can go a long way toward restoring health to urban ecosystems.

Markets

BWNC serves a diverse audience throughout Central New York, and traditionally the focus has been on elementary school age children. The success of the Nature in the City program has opened doors to urban audiences, presenting some exciting new opportunities that will be met in the coming years. It is important, also, to continue to serve our suburban and rural audiences.

In 2007, BWNC contracted with Bolger and Battle, Inc. to create an integrated branding and marketing plan. The full plan is located in the Appendix. What follows here is a summary of the main objectives of the plan, a list of BWNC's current audiences, summaries as to how these audiences are served, general Central New York demographics, and some recommendations for increasing our marketing potential.

Marketing Objectives 2008-2010 (from Bolger and Battle, Inc. 2007 Marketing Plan)

- Increase program participation and revenues by 20% a year, with 60% of programs breakeven by YE2010.
- Increase funding from members, donors, grantors and sponsors by 10% a year.
- Increase use of facilities and trails by 10% per year.
- Increase membership 10% a year to 1300 members by YE 2010.

Major Opportunities in Marketing

- Leverage the launch of new brand identity to significantly increase awareness and positive perceptions of Baltimore Woods
- Support marketing strategy with upgrades to programs, signage, facilities, web site and exhibits to create an exceptional Baltimore Woods brand experience for members and visitors
- Reach out consistently to existing and new audiences with targeted onsite and offsite programming, membership, sponsorship and other engagement opportunities

As of December 2008, much of the tactical marketing plan has been accomplished in terms of external outputs (website upgrades, building upgrades, etc). The marketing committee will need to work with the Program Committee to develop means of consistently reaching out to audiences in effort to monitor audience perception and desires for programming. Furthermore, as BWNC grows into the premier nature center envisioned, it is vital that all members of the organization adopt a market mindset in every way. Staff and board members, volunteers, programs and facilities must all take on the "brand identity" and demonstrate unified effort in promoting BWNC and its messages. Refer to the attached Marketing Plan for more information on branding and brand identity.

Audiences

BWNC operates within Central New York, serving rural, suburban, and urban audiences. The city of Syracuse is a typical working class city in a state of decline from its industrial hey-day.

Current External Audiences

These are current audiences served, either directly through programs, or indirectly as casual visitors or other users of the Baltimore Woods property. External Audiences are grouped into two major categories: Active and Passive Users. Active Users are those that pay for services. Passive Users are those that visit the property but do not necessarily give back to BWNC. Each major group is then broken into more specific groups, known as Strategic Business Units (SBUs). Each SBU is then divided into more detailed audiences.

ACTIVE USERS

Children

- Summer day campers (ages 4-12)
- Adventure day campers (ages 5-12)
- Suburban elementary school groups for field trips to Baltimore Woods
- Urban elementary school students for Nature in the City program
- Urban middle school students at school, during school hours
- Urban children not at school
- Suburban children not at school
- Teenagers not at school
- Birthday party program attendees
- Scout groups for guided program

Children make up the bulk of BWNC's target audience, whether at Baltimore Woods, or off-site in the Syracuse City schools and parks. Currently, Summer Nature Day Camp is the largest program in terms of participant hours (approximately 16,500 hours/summer). In 2008-9 the Nature in the City programs are delivered in 11 Syracuse schools. Opportunities exist within the city for expansion of NITC, developing an after school program, and starting a summer camp in city parks for urban youth. Scout groups are also an underserved audience, developing a set of programs targeted at badge instruction and "Leave No Trace" outdoor ethics might attract more scout groups.

Families

- Weekend program attendees
- Weekday evening program attendees

Families typically attend weekend or weekday evening programs at Baltimore Woods in Marcellus. These programs are designed to offer traditional nature experiences, highlighting pioneer traditions, night hikes, maple sugaring, snowshoeing, outdoor cooking, astronomy, etc. Programs in Syracuse have been limited, but have included urban birding, backyard maple sugaring, and wildflower walks.

Adults

- Seniors for weekday program
- Single adults without children other than seniors
- Gardeners for guided activities
- Coupled adults without children for weekend or weeknight programs
- Astronomy enthusiasts
- Birders

The “Senior Moments” weekday program is currently a twice-monthly program that could take a variety of forms: lectures, demonstrations, guided walks, discussion groups, etc. It is popular among the regular attendees, but being free for members, it generates very little revenue. The astronomy programs, run by Bob Piekil are also popular among adults and families. The Faust Wildflower Garden attracts many adults in the springtime, with walks led by the caretaker Audrey Loewer. On the whole, this is an underserved SBU, and given the organization’s focus on children that is to be expected. However, providing more opportunities for these audiences might help to bring in more resources, either financial or even volunteer support. Programs that include some outdoor fitness/recreation opportunities or wildlife art may attract more adults.

PASSIVE USERS

Outdoor recreationists

- Hikers
- Photographers / artists
- Amateur naturalists
- Runners

Home School Groups

Gardeners

Building renters for non program use

Nature and Wildlife Art admirers

The Baltimore Woods property currently has 182 acres of forests and fields with 6 miles of hiking trails. There are several gardens, a pond, streams, and other wetlands. The property is open to the public free of charge 365 days per year. The John A. Weeks Interpretive Center is open 6 days a week, and includes a nature library, art gallery, bird watching/feeding station, and a large room that is available to rent for special functions. The Baltimore Woods site specific plan will address opportunities to engage passive users to move them into an active user category.

Internal Audiences

The following audience groups consist of individuals that contribute directly to the operation of BWNC. This includes staff, volunteers, partners, donors, and membership. Support provided by these groups is crucial to the success of programs.

Volunteers

BWNC relies heavily on volunteer support for facility upkeep, garden care, trail work, reception, fund-raising, and other events not directly led by education staff. Many volunteers regularly attend programs. By way of recognition and gratitude, BWNC hosts volunteer luncheons every month and a special holiday dinner in December.

Currently, there is very little volunteer support for program delivery. Having a group of trained volunteers to assist with program needs would reduce strain on education staff, and increase program capacity. Volunteer coordination can be improved by having a single point of entry, and clear protocol for taking volunteers from the initial inquiry to productive work.

Membership

BWNC members are a diverse group, many of whom fall under one or more of the listed SBUs. Most program attendees are registered members. There are members that support this organization through their membership that never attend programs. The majority of memberships at the Family level stem directly from the summer camp policy of required membership to have access to any camps.

Member benefits include:

- Subscription to The Overlook, BWNC's bimonthly newsletter
- Program fees waived or discounted, depending on the specific program
- Discounts at over 150 nature centers across the United States and Canada
- Free use of modern snowshoes while at Baltimore Woods
- Reduced rental rate for the John A Weeks Interpretive Center
- Access to Summer Camp and school break Adventure Camps
- Members-only plant sale
- Voting rights at the BWNC Annual Meeting
- The opportunity to be involved in the growth and development of an important educational effort
- Helping to preserve the valuable and beautiful environment for now and for the future

Business Partners

BWNC has a few notable business partnerships which have led to mutually beneficial interactions. Current partners include Save the County Land Trust, Marcellus Rotary, Sycamore Hill Gardens, Nightingale Mills Hardware and several others. Partners are included in all mailings from BWNC, including the newsletter. Partnerships have provided excellent opportunities to network with other non-profits, and allow BWNC to give back to the community through participation at events.

Donors

BWNC would have a tremendous task of simply operating without donor support. Funds from donors made it possible to create the interpretive center at Baltimore Woods. Donor support helps send underprivileged children to summer camp, buy program supplies, maintain facilities, train staff, and enables many other aspects of day to day operation.

Donors also receive a newsletter, and those that wish are acknowledged in the interpretive center on sidewalk pavers and/or on the donor tree.

Business partners and donors are critical aspects of fund development for BWNC. The Business Plan calls for the creation of a Fund Development Plan to increase donor and business partnership networks. BWNC is currently working with a fund developing consultant to create a Fund Development Plan.

Staff

The staff includes all paid employees of BWNC. Being the primary contact point for every other audience, it is important that staff know, understand, and believe in BWNC's message. Quarterly performance reviews provide opportunities for garnering staff feedback. Staff meetings help ensure timely communication. Staff members are encouraged to seek out development opportunities. BWNC works with the Central New York Community Foundation's Staff Advancement Initiative when opportunities arise to acquire funding to support special trainings. Professional networking is also highly encouraged, especially through the Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) and the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

Future Audiences

Staff, board members, and membership have identified several potential audiences that can be targeted as active users. These are:

- Scout groups for guided activities
- Local middle and high school environmental clubs
- Children ages 0-4
- Homeschooled children (individuals and groups)

In addition, BWNC can seek partnerships with more local businesses as sponsors for programs or events. These partnerships should explore possibilities for offering discounts to BWNC members as a means of adding value to becoming a member.

The opportunity to create a nature center within Syracuse is innovative and exciting. Working directly with the communities of the area, connecting them to the natural world, and cultivating a sense of stewardship for their natural areas is the vision. It will be important, during the planning phase for a Syracuse location, to work closely with those markets through surveys and focus groups in order to gain their full support for this project.

Another heretofore unexplored market exists in the digital world. The new website will be an ideal place to extend the reach of BWNC's message far beyond Central New York. Images, videos, podcasts, online publications, and even a blog will become part of a "Virtual Baltimore Woods Nature Center"

drawing potential new audiences and donors. It will be a community resource for nature education, and an opportunity to further the brand.

Suggested Action Steps

- Develop targeted marketing plans for each site (ID key audiences, hold focus group sessions, ID audience needs, find solutions, implement plan, evaluate and adjust as needed)
- Continue to promote and live the brand, externally and internally
- Develop system to continuously monitor audience desires (surveys, focus groups)
- Develop scout program curricula
- Increase and diversify adult program offerings to include recreation/fitness, nature art, and lectures
- Foster partnerships with local businesses
- Develop web based interpretive materials
- Increase membership value
- Develop program volunteer group

Mechanics

Mechanics describes a visitor's experience, from the moment they enter the parking lot, throughout the visit, to the moment they exit the lot. Ideally, all BWNC sites will promote positive visitor experiences that foster connections to the natural world and promote sensible stewardship. Integrating an Interpretive Mechanics mindset into site and facility development decisions will ensure that scarce resources can have the most positive impact.

The BWNC business plan seeks to expand the organization's influence throughout Central New York. Being physically located within (or very near) cities and city parks is the best way to truly realize the mission. Although it will be left to the individual site plans to develop specific mechanics for each site, linking each platform visually through branding and common visitor experiences will be important. This section of the Master Interpretive Plan will provide guidelines for revitalizing existing sites as well as for developing new ones.

Criteria for New Sites

Rising transportation costs have put traditional field trips at risk for many schools. Neighborhood parks are the living classrooms of Syracuse's future. Creating nature centers in these neighborhood parks, close to schools, is both an economically and ecologically sound delivery model to facilitate learning experiences. Carefully choosing the right site for place-based education is vital to the success of BWNC's mission. There are many parks and natural spaces throughout Central New York that may have great resources for some activities, but fall short in other areas. Finding the right blend of landscape elements will allow programs and other activities to have maximum impact. In order for a site to be considered as a new location for a community nature center, it must contain the following features:

- Access to natural water features(ponds, and/or streams, etc)
- Forested areas adequate for trails
- Field space
- Public access, including room for school bus maneuverability
- An existing or planned building on or adjacent to the site
- Be strategically located to maximize access by local schools

Site Considerations

Each site should seek to incorporate sound interpretive techniques into all aspects of site design. Good resources for understanding interpretive design are:

- *Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits* by Gross, Zimmerman, and Bucholz
- *Environmental Interpretation, a Practical Guide* by Sam Ham
- *Interpretive Planning* by Lisa Brochu
- *Director's Guide to Best Practices: Interpretive Design of Nature Centers – Buildings* by Donald Watson

- *Director's Guide to Best Practices: Interpretive Design of Nature Centers – Exhibits* by Donald Watson

These books are all available at the Interpretive Center at Baltimore Woods, or can be purchased through the Association of Nature Center Administrators or National Association for Interpretation.

The nature of this organization's partnerships with Save the County Land Trust and the Syracuse City Parks Department often means that BWNC moves into existing structures and locations. Whenever possible, BWNC should work with these organizations and their landscape architects to provide input on site design and development. As a primary stakeholder in these locations, BWNC should also seek to be included in land management planning activities. The following are general guidelines to keep in mind during the planning phases for any site development activities.

Site Development Guidelines:

- Sites must be connected visually through use of the branding standards, as found in the Marketing Plan
- Sites should integrate elements that promote BWNC's thematic messages throughout the site and facilities.
- Thematic elements should be related to Central New York's environment
- New structures should blend with or compliment the natural landscape
- Adequate space should exist for staff needs and storage, and should be separate from public spaces
- Public spaces should be kept clean and organized, and free of items that distract from the visitors' positive experiences
- Signage should be branded, easy to read, properly located, and convey positive messages
- Design of public spaces should take into account ease of movement, obvious directional cues, and handicapped accessibility
- All facilities should promote sensible stewardship, especially in building materials and design, whenever possible

The BWNC Experience

Integrating a common set of experiences among multiple sites will unite messages across platforms. All sites should seek to include:

- Nature Play Area for children that utilizes natural materials
- Citizen Science stations that allow visitor participation
- Community gardens that highlight backyard habitats, native plants, and vegetable cultivation
- Bird and other wildlife viewing stations
- Signage that highlights "green" building materials and methods
- Hiking trails with multiple levels of difficulty

Action Steps

- Update land management plan for the Baltimore Woods site
- Develop site specific interpretive plan for the Baltimore Woods site that incorporates Mechanics Guidelines
- Perform a Sign Needs Assessment for Baltimore Woods site
- Create a Signage Plan for Baltimore Woods site
- Begin development of site specific plan for a Syracuse platform

Media

Interpretive Media refers to any tool that BWNC uses to communicate its messages. This includes programs, events, brochures, the website, publications, exhibits, signs, trail pamphlets, gardens, and any other structural elements that can help relate BWNC's stories.

It is impractical for this Master Plan to go into any great detail about particular media choices. It will be left to the individual sites to determine the most appropriate media selections for any particular need, based on site resources, staff availability, etc. However, this section of the plan will outline major program categories and successful programs within those groups. It will also provide recommended guidelines for media selection, design, and evaluation. The Business Plan clearly delegates development of a comprehensive program management plan that includes a strategy to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate all programs to the Program Manager position that is currently posted. The recommendations presented here are meant to support the preferred vision with better program efficacy.

Program Categories

Nature Day Camp has run successfully for more than 20 years. It supports Subtheme 1 (The benefits of connections to nature throughout childhood cannot be overestimated). By engaging children in frequent positive outdoor experiences, the summer camp program has been very effective at cultivating a sense of stewardship at an early age and into adulthood. Nature Day Camp includes summer camp and "Adventure Camps" during the school breaks.

School Programs

Nature in the City (NITC) has opened a door to engaging urban youth. The individual programs are designed to help these schoolchildren recognize, understand, and appreciate the nature that can be found in the city. Currently, BWNC naturalists visit each elementary school classroom up to three times a year in participating schools. The success of this program has given rise to other opportunities within the City of Syracuse, including the creation of a community nature center within the city limits.

On-site School programs are school field trips to Baltimore Woods. Popular programs include *Aquatic Ecology*, *Snowstories and Tracking*, *Photosynthesis Phun*, and *Sensing Nature*. The site specific interpretive plan for Baltimore Woods will address future development of on-site school programs.

Group Programs include activities for scouts, birthday parties, or any other "group" that may request programming. Scout programs tend to be geared toward particular badges. Birthday Parties follow the same philosophy of nature play that guides day camp programs.

Public Programs

The education staff has endeavored to create a core set of programming for public audiences (i.e. not school groups or day camps). These programs are designed to highlight the natural features of Baltimore Woods, develop appreciation for nature wherever people happen to be, and compliment successful programs such as day camps and NITC.

Senior Moments programs provide educational opportunities to senior citizens. These programs usually focus on natural history, environmental science, pioneer lifestyles, and “green” living topics. Many subthemes are relayed through these programs.

Night Walks can take many forms, but continue to be popular among families and adults. Some successful examples are the *Double Dog Dare Walk*, *Night Buggin’*, *Winter Solstice*, *Caroling in the Woods*, and *Night Snowshoeing*.

Frog Catching Parties are very popular among families, especially those with young children. The chance to handle frogs is a classic experience that also presents opportunities to teach children how to handle animals with care.

Cabin Campfires are consistently well attended programs that demonstrate Subthemes 3 and 5 (Community relationships to nature, and cultural history of CNY and sustainability) through the lives of the early settlers.

Untapped Opportunities

There are several interpretive media possibilities that are not currently well developed within BWNC.

Web Based Media

- The new website went live on January 2, 2009. It extends exposure of the messages far beyond what was available previously. Inclusion of photographs, podcasts, nature journal blogs, videos, or any other “e-media” on the website could extend the visitor experience beyond their visit to one of the sites. It could also help tap into teenage audiences. Development of these materials would require very little financial input as BWNC already owns the software needed.

Nature in the City

- The NITC program can be revitalized by including a more science based curriculum that meets state curriculum standards. This should make it more salable to the school district, and increase earned income revenues.

Afterschool Programs

- Creating an **afterschool program** for area youth is a viable opportunity to continue environmental science education and to provide mentoring opportunities.

Interpretive Signs

- Interpretive Trail Signage at any site can be an effective communication tool. Many visitors never interact with a naturalist, and any non-personal media that is thoughtfully designed and positioned will increase BWNC's odds of communicating messages.

Land Management

- In setting an example for stewardship of the land BWNC uses, it will be important to interpret land management activities to visitors. This can be done in a variety of ways, but should include signage and "stewardship walks."

Exhibits

- Exhibits are another industry standard for increasing contact with visitors, and for increasing the overall quality of the visitor experience. Exhibits will allow BWNC to communicate messages that may be impractical for programs.

Scout Programs

- Scout Programs are an underdeveloped area of programming. Scout curricula should be developed to fulfill badge requirements and provide unique opportunities. Community service is a common advancement requirement for scouts and, if actively managed, could have significant benefits for BWNC.

Preschool Programs

- With the exception of Nature's Little Explorers day camp for Preschoolers, there is very little programming targeted at this age group. Successful models exist at other educational centers, including Fontenelle Forest Nature Center and the Buffalo Zoo, which could easily be molded to fit BWNC's messages and resource restrictions. Engaging this market will carry participation into camp and other programs for older children.

Roving Naturalists

- Roving Volunteer Naturalists on the trails during peak visitation, especially weekends, would have significant benefits. Many visitors never have contact with BWNC representatives. Roving naturalists would extend BWNC's messages to hikers, helping move them from passive users to active participants.

Mentoring

- In order to truly bring about transformations in individuals and the communities where BWNC operates, it will be important to provide **mentoring opportunities** for area youth. Mentoring will come about as a result of successful programming for children, and providing volunteer opportunities where children and adults can work side-by-side.

Guidelines for Media Selection

There is no one “perfect” recipe for media selection. Choosing the appropriate method of communicating a message will depend on many factors such as: the message, the audience, site resources, staff availability, and budget constraints. Even so, there are some important questions that should be asked when deciding how best to develop interpretive media.

- What is the message being conveyed?
- Who is the audience for this message?
- Does this support any of the organizational goals or objectives?
- Would this message be better relayed as a personal program or as non-personal media?
- Who will develop the media?
- Is there sufficient staff or volunteer support available?
- Is there sufficient infrastructure (storage, workspace, etc.) to support the media?
- Are there any site resources that will support the media?
- What are the budget constraints?

Guidelines for Personal Program Design

BWNC believes that the key to fulfilling our mission is to offer the highest quality interpretive programming possible that will cultivate a personal connection to, and an abiding love for the natural world. The philosophies listed below will help staff to direct their program planning efforts to achieve these ends.

All programs should:

- Allow participants to experience nature hands-on through direct, active personal involvement
- Follow basic interpretation principles of being relevant, organized, thematic, and pleasurable
- Be well researched
- Promote the value of learning about and understanding the natural world
- Promote a sense of respect and stewardship by setting positive examples
- Promote healthy fun in the outdoors
- Seize upon teachable moments and relate them to the topic at hand
- Utilize natural materials including props and artifacts
- Be relevant to the ecology of Central New York
- Include tools to evaluate program effectiveness

Programs for children should meet all the above criteria, and in addition should:

- Be developed and delivered by trained and experienced educators who are able to thoughtfully manage groups of children
- Be developmentally appropriate
- Maintain small educator to participant ratios whenever possible (1:12)

Guidelines for Non-personal Media

Non-personal media refers to signs, exhibits, brochures, publications, the website, and any landscape or facility features that can be used to communicate messages. *Environmental Interpretation, a Practical Guide* by Sam Ham provides a good reference for interpretive design basics.

All non-personal media should:

- Be appropriately branded following the branding guidelines according to the Marketing Plan
- Follow sound interpretive design techniques
- Be accessible to diverse levels of physical abilities
- Utilize the highest quality materials that budget constraints allow
- Include interactive elements into exhibit design wherever appropriate

Media Evaluation Methods

Interpretive media is the tool to achieve BWNC's mission, therefore all interpretive media should be evaluated regularly. This will ensure that BWNC's standards of program quality, effectiveness, and relevance are maintained. In addition, frequent evaluation will help program staff to identify messages and markets that may be neglected. Non-personal media should be evaluated both before and after implementation to make sure expensive products do not become wasted resources.

Current evaluation tools in place for personal programs include web-based surveys through SurveyMonkey.com for Nature in the City and Summer Nature Day Camp. In addition, participants in Day Camp have the option of filling out a paper survey. Recently, the program staff began using evaluative survey cards during public programs. While generally useful, these surveys are in need of revision to meet current data needs. There are currently very few opportunities for school children to evaluate programs, or for staff to evaluate the effectiveness of programs delivered to school groups. Creative evaluation tools that could be added to programs include letter writing, drawing, and "secret mission" cards.

Non-personal media evaluations can take many forms. Interpretive trail signs should be first set up as computer printouts before more expensive sign materials are purchased. This will allow time to observe visitor reactions to the signs. Brochures should also be printed as mock-ups and distributed to

volunteers for feedback before expensive printing costs are incurred. Working models of exhibits should be fabricated before expensive materials are used. This will allow exhibit designers to identify which aspects of the exhibit work and which ones need revision. Staff and volunteers should make frequent observations of visitors interacting with exhibits, and keep notes on how much time individuals stay at a particular exhibit.

The Market/Message/Media Matrix

This is a valuable tool for identifying which markets and messages are being served by different media options, and which are being neglected. It will also help to direct media choice by identifying the target audience.

Messages are plotted on the y-axis, Markets on the x-axis. Media selections are then plotted at the intersections of Messages and Markets. Intersections left blank indicate messages or markets that are not being served. Depending on the message and the market, these blank spaces could be intentional. If the blank spaces are not intentionally blank, this represents a missed opportunity that should be addressed.

For example:

| SUBTHEME 1 | Suburban Day Campers | Urban Children (5-12yrs) | Teens |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Storyline A | Summer Day Camp | | CITs |
| Storyline B | Summer & Vacation Camps | | CITs |
| Storyline C | Summer & Vacation Camps | NITC programs | ECOTREK Hikes |

Action Steps:

- Design Program Management Strategy
- Revise NITC programs to include a more science based curriculum
- Revise NITC and Summer Camp surveys to meet current data needs
- Continue use of evaluative surveys during public programs
- Find creative ways to obtain feedback from program participants, especially school children
- Develop Scout Program curricula
- Develop preschool age programs
- Develop afterschool programs
- Develop trail signage plans as part of site specific interpretive plans
- Develop exhibit plans as part of site specific plans
- Develop the new website to include interpretive media

Action Plan

This action plan lays out suggested time frames for completing Outputs under each Management Goal. Suggestions are based on priority, and ease of task. Each output will include abbreviations for who is responsible for the task, and estimated costs associated with implementation. Costs are abbreviated thusly:

- \$ = \$0 - \$1000
- \$\$ = \$1000 – \$10,000
- \$\$\$ = \$10,000 +

Personnel Resources:

Full Time Staff:

- Executive Director (Ex)
- Program Manager (PM)
- Marketing/Executive Assistant (M)
- Office/Building Manager (OM)
- Educator III (Eds)
- Educator II (Eds)
- Camp Director/Educator/Exhibit Manager (CD, EM, and Eds)

Part Time Staff:

- Land Manager (LM)
- Educator I (Eds)

Seasonal Staff:

- Summer Camp Counselors (~15)
- Seasonal Intern (~ 4 per year)

Board Committees (consisting of board members, staff, and volunteers):

- Program Committee (PC)
- Fund Development Committee (FDC)
- Marketing/Membership Committee (MC)
- Land Management Committee (LMC)

Other

- Volunteer Coordinator (VC)

Phase 1, 1-3 years

Goal 1 - Provide safe natural areas for communities to develop connections to the natural world.

Objective 1.2: Increase the use of hiking trails and other appropriate recreational opportunities at all sites

- a) Design designated play areas to provide safe and inviting nature play opportunities for children (Eds/LM, \$\$)

Objective 1.3: Have all year-round employees certified in CPR for the Professional Rescuer and First Aid: Responding to Emergencies (or equivalent)

- a) Annual CPR for the Professional Rescuer and First Aid: Responding to Emergencies training opportunities paid and provided for all year-round staff (Ex/All, \$)

Objective 1.4: Develop systems to assess and manage safety issues at sites, and in transit for programming

- a) Staff and Board of Directors develop a Safety Plan (B/Staff, \$)
- b) Create permission slip for walking field trip participants to travel to local parks during school hours (PC/Eds, \$)

Goal 2 - Provide a community resource for environmental education and involvement within the communities where nature centers are based

Objective 2.1: Create a neighborhood nature center(s) in Syracuse that offers quality environmental education opportunities

- c) Offer summer camp and school vacation camp programs at appropriate sites (CD/Eds/PM, \$\$\$)
- d) Develop afterschool programs for neighborhood children (Eds/PM, \$\$)
- e) Develop on-site school programs that are designed to meet NYS standards in science, as well as to offer unique experiences for students and teachers (Eds/PM, \$)

Objective 2.2: Increase involvement and visibility in the local communities where nature centers are based

- a) Participate in community wide events (Eds/VC/B, \$)
- b) Partner with a diverse group of local businesses and community groups to support large programs and events (Ex/B/FDC, \$\$)

Objective 2.3: Provide numerous and diverse opportunities for people of all ages to have meaningful involvement with the organization

- a) Refine volunteer recruitment and coordination to keep pace with the organizational growth (VC/PM/OM/LM, \$)

- b) Clearly define roles for community members to volunteer as a part of the office management, land management, or program teams (VC/PM/OM/LM, \$)
- c) Create committees of staff and volunteers to assist in the development, marketing, and execution of all large programs and events (PM/MC/VC, \$)
- d) Develop programs that educate volunteers on the BWNC mission and activities (Eds, \$)
- e) Develop a community of philanthropists that can participate through financial donations (Ex, B/FDC, \$)

Objective 2.4: Program management and volunteer coordination intentionally facilitates intergenerational mentoring opportunities

- g) Train teenagers to volunteer as camp Counselors-In-Training (CD/Eds, \$)

Goal 3 - Promote awareness and knowledge of the natural world through high quality interpretive media

Objective 3.1: Create site specific interpretive plans for Baltimore Woods and Syracuse platforms (Ex assigns, \$\$)

Objective 3.4: Develop the website to include educational materials

- a) Education staff maintains a weekly blog in the form of a nature journal about Central New York (Eds, \$)

Objective 3.5: Promote networking and professional development among BWNC staff

- a) Educational staff attends NAI and NYSOEA conferences and workshops every year (Eds/PM, \$\$)
- b) Program Manager and Executive Director attend ANCA summit each year (Ex/PM, \$\$)
- c) Encourage other non-program staff to seek out professional development opportunities (Ex, \$)
- d) Obtain and maintain organizational membership in NAI, NYSOEA, and ANCA (Ex/PM, \$)

Goal 4 - Work with local schools and organizations to provide curriculum based on the natural sciences

Objective 4.1: Revitalize and design all school programs to be developmentally appropriate and meet mandated science standards for specific grade level audiences

- a) Hold focus group meetings with school teachers and curriculum liaisons to obtain input on audience needs for science based programming (Eds/PM, \$)
- b) Feedback from curricular liaisons is used to re-align school program curriculum with teacher needs (Eds/PM, \$\$)
- c) Programs that are not science based are re-aligned or cut from the school program curriculum (Eds/PM, \$)
- d) Grade level programs are designed in series, with connected themes that build off of each other (Eds/PM, \$)

- e) Unique programs are designed for each grade level (Eds/PM, \$)
- f) Prop bins and write-ups for each program are developed by the end of the 2009-2010 school year (Eds/PM, \$\$)

Goal 5 – Set an example of stewardship in the natural areas we utilize by helping to protect and revitalize them

Objective 5.1: Work with Save the County to create a new Land Management Plan for Baltimore Woods

- a) Create an interpretive plan for Baltimore Woods that will help inform the Land Management Plan (Ex assigns, \$)
- b) Perform flora, fauna, and habitat survey of Baltimore Woods (LM, \$)
- c) BWNC Land Management Committee will work with STC to create a new land management plan (LM/LMC/Eds, \$)

Objective 5.2: Develop interpretive media to educate visitors about land management decisions and practices at all sites.

- a) Undergo sign needs assessments at all sites as part of developing site specific interpretive plans (LM/EM/MC, \$)

Goal 6 - Provide interpretation in ways that are sustainable in both finances and human resources

Objective 6.1: Develop targeted marketing plans for each operating platform

- a) Hold focus group meetings with key audience groups (MC, \$)
- b) Create targeted marketing plans based on audience input (MC, \$\$)
- c) Integrate these marketing plans into site specific interpretive plans (MC/Planner, \$)

Objective 6.2: Develop a comprehensive program management plan that includes a strategy to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate all personal programs (PM, \$)

Objective 6.3: Create and implement a multifaceted system to continuously monitor audience desire for programming

- a) Develop and hone program evaluations for camp, NITC, on-site school, public programs, and group programs (PM/CD/Eds, \$)
- c) Include formative evaluations in the design of school programs (Eds, \$)

Objective 6.5: Increase internship opportunities with area colleges and universities

- a) Refine and implement intern program to include training, practice and evaluation of interns throughout the year (PM/LM, \$\$)
- b) Partner with local college and university education programs to solicit interns (PM/LM, \$)

Objective 6.6: Cultivate a group of qualified Contract Naturalists to provide additional programming

- a) Recruit qualified individuals (PM, \$\$)

Phase 2, 3-5 years

Goal 1 - Provide safe natural areas for communities to develop connections to the natural world.

Objective 1.1: Provide activities for communities that promote positive and safe use, stewardship, and a sense of connection to natural areas.

- a) Schedule programs or events for families and/or adults every weekend, with the exception of holiday weekends (PM/Eds, \$)
- d) Hold multiple volunteer events each year that invite families, scouts, businesses, and community groups to participate in stewardship projects (LM, \$)

Goal 2 - Provide a community resource for environmental education and involvement within the communities where nature centers are based

Objective 2.1: Create a neighborhood nature center(s) in Syracuse that offers quality environmental education opportunities (All, \$\$\$)

- f) Hold lecture series events for adults (Eds, \$)

Objective 2.4: Program management and volunteer coordination intentionally facilitates intergenerational mentoring opportunities

- a) Design school and afterschool programs to be completed in series, where each program builds on the last visit, and students work with the same educator throughout the series, whenever possible (Eds, \$)
- b) Conduct informal programs (weekend walks, citizen science projects, community events) in neighborhoods where school and afterschool programs are also being conducted (Eds, \$)
- e) Develop a series of programs for teenagers that include service projects (Eds, \$)

Goal 3 - Promote awareness and knowledge of the natural world through high quality interpretive media

Objective 3.2: Have one staff member be certified by NAI as a Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT)

- a) BWNC provides support for a full time educator to attend CIT training (PM/Eds, \$\$)

Objective 3.3: Have all educators take the National Association for Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course and achieve certification

- a) BWNC provides support for educators to attend CIG training (PM/Eds, \$\$)

Objective 3.4: Develop the website to include educational materials

- a) Develop fund support mechanisms for putting educational materials on the website (PM/Eds, \$)
- b) Education staff creates a series of educational media for the website that focuses on natural history, outdoor recreational activities, and that encourages users to visit our facilities (Eds, \$)

Goal 5 – Set an example of stewardship in the natural areas we utilize by helping to protect and revitalize them

Objective 5.1: Work with Save the County to create a new Land Management Plan for Baltimore Woods

- a) Inform land management volunteers on the new plans goals and methods (LM, \$)

Objective 5.2: Develop interpretive media to educate visitors about land management decisions and practices at all sites.

- a) Create interpretive signage where appropriate (Eds/LM, \$\$)

Goal 6 - Provide interpretation in ways that are sustainable in both finances and human resources

Objective 6.3: Create and implement a multifaceted system to continuously monitor audience desire for programming

- b) Hold annual meetings and seasonal evaluations with school teachers to determine curriculum effectiveness (PM/Eds, \$)

Objective 6.4: Create a group of trained volunteers to assist with programming needs

- a) Design Volunteer Naturalist programs to provide training for volunteer educators and roving naturalists (PM/Eds, \$)

Phase 3, 5 + years, or low priority

Goal 1 - Provide safe natural areas for communities to develop connections to the natural world.

Objective 1.1: Provide activities for communities that promote positive and safe use, stewardship, and a sense of connection to natural areas.

- c) Promote community events that encourage positive site usage (i.e.; festivals, galas, interest groups) (MC, \$)

Objective 1.2: Increase the use of hiking trails and other appropriate recreational opportunities at all sites

- a) Develop incentive programs that encourage the use of established trail systems for physical fitness (Eds/LM, \$)

Goal 5 – Set an example of stewardship in the natural areas we utilize by helping to protect and revitalize them

Objective 5.2: Develop interpretive media to educate visitors about land management decisions and practices at all sites.

- a) Develop a land management guided walk to showcase management practices in effect (Eds, \$)

APPENDIX

The Planning Process

This Master Interpretive Plan is the result of a combined group effort on the part of Baltimore Woods staff, the program committee, the board of directors, [REDACTED] our ADVANS consultant, and the program participants, members, teachers, camp counselors, and volunteers who have given valuable feedback throughout the process. Staff members include [REDACTED]. The Program Committee, made up of board members, volunteers, camp parents, retired teachers, and a Masters in Interpretation student has served as a liaison to the Board of Directors. They have been responsible for final approval of all sections of this plan. Committee members are: [REDACTED].

The planning process began in 2008 with a staff retreat facilitated by [REDACTED], the ADVANS consultant BWNC has been working closely with as part of the capacity building program. As coordinator of the planning efforts, [REDACTED] set the agenda for the meeting, which can be found in the appendix. The staff undertook a vision assessment exercise, the details of which can also be found in the appendix.

In late 2007 BWNC contracted with Bolger and Battle, Inc to create a marketing plan. This process included a survey that was filled out by staff, volunteers, camp counselors, teachers, and board members.

As part of the vision assessment for developing a new business plan, the ADVANS program conducted a separate survey that was filled out by staff and board members.

Bolger and Battle's Marketing survey, the ADVANS survey, and the 2002 member survey were on hand during the staff retreat in an effort to include these responses in the process.

Upon the recommendation of Bolger and Battle, a survey of members was conducted by BWNC in 2008. Although conducted after the staff retreat, this survey has been considered carefully throughout the writing of this plan. Copies of the marketing survey questions and the 2008 member survey questions can be found in the appendix.

Both formal and informal interviews were held with many stakeholders throughout 2008. These included volunteers, camp counselors, teachers, board members, business partners, and teachers. Funding through the ADVANS program allowed BWNC to bring Ken Leinbach, the executive director of Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center, to Syracuse in November 2008 for an onsite consultation regarding the feasibility and process of setting up an additional nature center in the city. His insights have been very helpful in the development of this plan.

BWNC – 42 years and counting!

Baltimore Woods Nature Center has been serving the Central New York community through nature education and awareness for 42 years. It is a non-profit organization which is not supported by government funds. BWNC's operational expenses rely on donations, grants, program fees, fund raisers, and a loyal membership. A board of directors oversees its activities. The organization was incorporated on December 12, 1966 as Onondaga Nature Centers (ONC). The mission was to establish outdoor conservation education centers to instill a greater understanding and appreciation of nature and natural resources throughout Onondaga County.

For the first few years ONC was a planning organization with no address. In time, ONC entered a partnership with Onondaga County to develop and operate Beaver Lake Nature Center, in Baldwinsville, NY. Beaver Lake opened to the public in 1971. ONC quickly grew as an organization, added staff, and extended the message of understanding and appreciation to area schools. By 1977 Beaver Lake Nature Center was considered a success. ONC turned operations over to the county, and looked to creating more nature education centers.

Not surprisingly, "Onondaga Nature Centers" had become synonymous with Beaver Lake Nature Center. In an effort to retain its individual identity, ONC changed its name to Centers for Nature Education, Inc. (CNE).

CNE chose a location north of Ithaca, NY for their next endeavor. Planning for the Cayuga Nature Center (CNC) had been underway for a few years, and by 1982, the CNC began to prosper on its own and separated from CNE.

Also in 1977, CNE was approached by Save the County Land Trust, Inc. to manage their newly purchased Baltimore Woods property in Marcellus, NY. CNE agreed and set up headquarters at Baltimore Woods. Originally, the site was operated as a Historic Land Use Center, but over the years the focus has shifted to primarily nature education.

Concern that low income and lack of exposure to natural settings in under-resourced Syracuse neighborhoods limited residents' access to CNE services led to the initiation of a comprehensive outreach program to Syracuse in 1999.

In 2002, CNE launched its award winning Nature in the City (NITC) program, once again reaching out to schoolchildren, serving the urban elementary and middle schools of Syracuse. With the success of Nature in the City, the organization is continuing to grow and strengthen its presence in Central New York. As of this writing, NITC is in eleven city elementary schools, and new prospects for creating community nature centers exist within Syracuse.

In 2007, BWNC was selected by a Gifford Foundation initiative called Advancing and Developing the Value and Assets of Non-profits in Syracuse (ADVANS) to partake in a three year pilot program to help provide the tools necessary to build capacity as an organization. This led to the creation of a new

strategic business plan, revised mission, and revitalized vision. Today, BWNC seeks to transform individuals and communities through place-based education.

By 2008, “Centers for Nature Education” had become synonymous with Baltimore Woods. Instead of fighting that identity, CNE chose to change its name to Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

Staff Retreat Meeting Agenda (4 January 2008)

- 11:00 Starting Exercise – Affirmation Game (TOM)
- 11:10 Site Investigation: Listening to our own advice. We will take an hour long walk through the property to clear our heads and get centered for the rest of the day. This will also indirectly remind us of some of the uniqueness of BW. (TOM)
- 12:00 Lunch/Discussion: Who were we? What about now? During lunch we will investigate our scrap books, share stories about BW, and review some of the identity perceptions held by teachers, staff, volunteers, and board members as reported in the marketing survey. (TOM)
- 12:45 Clearing the Muddle: What exactly is Interpretive Planning? What is interpretation for that matter? Tom and Matt will interpret interpretation and the interpretive process. Tom will explain the master plan and the “interpretive plan” and clarify our objectives for the day and for the whole planning process. Katie will also answer any relative ADVANS questions in regard to this planning process and how it fits into our efforts there.
- 1:00 Vision Assessment Begins
- Define our Stories: Question 3 - Themes create a framework for developing effective interpretation. What are the important stories to be told by BWNC?
 - o Label our tangible resources (mapping activity - TOM)
 - o Define the intangibles: What are the meanings that people associate with the site? What is so significant about BW? (KATIE)
 - Define Audiences: Question 2 - . Who are our current target audiences? Who do you see as a potential audience?
 - o Include survey results from marketing plan to augment staff input.
 - o Rank according to importance.
 - Define Goals for Interpretation: Question 1 - In your opinion, what are the most important goals of BWNC?
 - o “Goals” as defined in Interpretive Planning, should answer the question, “What does management want to accomplish through the provision of interpretive services?” Goals in this sense are not specifically measurable, but the supporting objectives of each goal are. For example, a goal could be, “To foster partnerships with other environmental organizations in Central New York.” A supporting objective might be to hold 2 major Onondaga Lake Park clean-up events with SUNY-ESF in 2008.
 - o Goals are not simply a reiteration of our mission; rather they are steps we can take toward fulfilling that mission.
 - o To relate this to the questionnaire, the real question we will try to answer is “Based on our mission, what are the most important goals for BW’s interpretation services?”
 - o Pertinent marketing survey results will be used to augment staff input.

- Site Development Opportunities: Question 4 - What future outdoor site development opportunities would enhance BWNC?
 - o Enhancement ideas should support our stories, not create new ones (unless there is a specific management goal to expand into new realms).
 - o Upper trails tour, led by Jeff to share Save the County's vision
 - o Return inside to brainstorm/rank ideas
- Facility Development Opportunities: Dream with a purpose. Question 5 - What buildings should be developed or re-developed at BWNC? What should be included in these buildings?
 - o It would be great for Patty to share some of the marketing committee's plans and discussions for the building at this time.

5:00 Dinner and Next Steps

Dinner should start around 5 PM, if we are still having productive conversations about earlier topics, or if we need to look at something again, these conversations should be allowed to continue.

Otherwise, this time should be used to inform the staff about next steps for the planning process. If everything goes extremely smoothly, and we have good stories and good goals, we can talk about goal objectives.

ADVANS Survey Questions posed to Staff, Board Members, and Volunteers

1. What is your dream vision of the organization in 5 yrs? Don't limit yourself here-think as big as you want!

Audience

The January, 2006 ANCA Consultants identified marketing as a key weak area at CNE (See ANCA report). Lee Gechas is responsible for sending out weekly public service announcements. CNE's annual marketing budget is \$2,500. Some paid advertising has been tried with local and regional newspapers, with limited success. Radio spots on WRVO FM-90 have been purchased with more success. CNE's former Executive Director John Weeks had a program called The Nature of Things on WRVO for decades, so there appears to be more receptivity among that audience.

Currently, audiences can be broken into the following major groups:

| Group | Methods |
|--|--|
| Young children and families with young children. | Camps have brought the most families and young children into CNE's fold. |
| Retired people looking for a place to make a contribution with their time and talents and be a part of a community of people that make a big difference. | Free lunch for volunteers on the third Wednesday of every month. The new Meet the Staff and Volunteers display in the reception area. The new volunteer and staff badges have been a big hit. |
| People who have connections and can give money. | CNE has not attracted many, but those we do have seem to be intimately connected with our volunteer program and/or our summer camp. |
| Syracuse Elementary Schools | Nature in the City programs and Billy B concerts in Syracuse elementary schools. |

Since completing the Interpretive Center in 2003 and initiating a before and after camp program, Summer Nature Day Camp income has increase markedly (\$37,000 gross income in the summer of 2002 versus \$61,000 in the summer of 2007).

Nature in the City is also a growing program. Initiated as the NOBEL program in 2002 in Roberts Elementary, this full program is now in five Syracuse elementary schools and two additional Syracuse

schools are contracted for partial Nature in the City programs. Such growth in programs needs to be accompanied by an increase in program staff.

- 2) Who needs us?
 - a) What do they need?
 - b) Has this changed over time?
 - c) How many markets are we in today? How has this changed over time?
 - d) Are there strong links between mission and our audience needs?
 - e) What are the linkages between market needs and our programs?
 - f) What future program possibilities do we perceive?
 - g) How many people are we serving now and how has that changed over the years? Are audiences growing, declining, flat?
 - h) Do we generally achieve the level of attendance we've planned?
 - i) Do we have the know-how and resources needed to attract and involve new audiences and program participants?
 - j) Do we have the resources needed to develop our educational and interpretive programs?

Values

CNE helps people realize that, whether they are in remote places like Baltimore Woods or in downtown Syracuse where peregrine falcons nest on the State Tower Building, we all can enjoy, understand, and protect the natural world that surrounds us.

People will not protect something that they feel no connection to. At CNE, programs are grounded in this philosophy:

AWARENESS, coupled with KNOWLEDGE leads to STEWARDSHIP

CNE recognizes there is a developmentally appropriate framework for programs that changes with age. Programs aimed at the youngest children focus on cultivating **awareness**. Young children learn with their bodies as much as their minds. Learning is often a bit messy and noisy too. Children attending Nature's Little Explorers Preschool camp learn about butterflies by making butterfly wings to wear while they sip nectar out of cups with very narrow straws. Older Nature Day Camp children learn about wetlands by going through the swamp at Baltimore Woods. Campers also pick up a good deal of **knowledge** about the natural world through stream and pond studies, orienteering, an archaeological dig, and nature hikes. Teenagers on Adirondack EcoTreks practice **stewardship** through community service projects repairing trail features in the Adirondack Mountains.

We want people to know CNE as an organization that:

- Connects people to the world around them
- Helps children appreciate nature
- Is a place where volunteers feel a strong sense of community and connection

- Appreciates its board, staff, and volunteers
- Values honesty and fairness
- Shows people that living well means leaving the planet in good shape for future generations
- Uses resources efficiently to deliver its mission to the public.

3) If everything else is changing, what are things that we aren't willing to change? List these and discuss.

a) Have these changed over time?

Branding and Marketing Survey
CENTERS FOR NATURE EDUCATION
August 2007

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

As a first step in developing an integrated branding and marketing plan for the Centers for Nature Education at Baltimore Woods, we would like your input in several key areas. To help you answer the questions below, please consider these definitions:

BRAND IDENTITY -- All components of an organization's identity, including visual elements, name, logo, tagline, signage, products, services, facilities and staff behavior and values. For example, McDonald's golden arches, the Nike swoosh - and all the characteristics, values and experiences they have come to stand for.

MARKETING - All actions taken by an organization to create awareness, deliver information, promote offerings and persuade customers and prospects to buy or use its products and/or services. This includes PR, advertising, direct marketing and a wide variety of other activities, both internal and external, designed to attract new customers and build relationships with existing customers.

CNEBW BRANDING AND POSITIONING

1. Please indicate your perception of CNEBW's current name and logo (check all that apply):

I think the current name and logo have a great deal of value and recognition and should be retained as is.

I think alternative name concepts should be considered as a part of developing a brand strategy.

I think alternative logo concepts should be considered as part of developing a brand strategy.

I think the addition of an appropriate tagline could enhance the current name and logo.

I think Baltimore Woods (a place) and Centers for Nature Education (a portfolio of on-site and off-site programs) are two fundamentally different entities which could be branded separately.

OTHER/Comments _____

2. What are the top three qualities or attributes you would like to see conveyed by the CNEBW brand identity (rank order three, with 1 being most important, etc.)

Family recreation

Childhood nature education

Environmental awareness/stewardship

Fun/entertainment

Health/fitness

Service to the community

Innovative programming

Friendly, welcoming

Professionalism

OTHER/Comments _____

3. What is the key physical attribute of CNEBW you would like to see considered for representation in possible alternative logo designs? (Choose 1)

- John A. Weeks Interpretive Center
- Log Cabin
- Wildlife
- Birds
- Woodland wildflowers
- Trails
- Trees
- Children
- Trillium
- Nature in the City visual
- Passing environmental awareness from one generation to the next
- OTHER/Comments _____

4. Compared to other recreational and educational opportunities in your area, what are the key differentiators that set CNEBW apart and make it unique? Check your top 3.

- Focus on children
- Creative programming
- Hands-on learning experiences
- Coordination with school curricula
- Nature study and recreational options for all ages
- Free hiking and snowshoe use
- Preschool programs
- Association with John Weeks
- Nature in the City program
- John A. Weeks Interpretive Center
- Community of volunteers
- OTHER/Comments _____

AUDIENCES:

5. Please check the top three audience segments you believe are the highest priority for CNEBW marketing and outreach. (Rank order, with 1 being most important)

- Current Members
- Prospective members
- Educators
- Parents with elementary age children
- Adults with a strong interest in the natural world
- Scout groups
- Tourists

- Volunteers
- Community leaders/businesses
- Teenagers
- Families
- Seniors
- Home schoolers
- PTO leaders
- OTHERS (please specify) _____

6. Please rank the top three groups below in order of priority for CNEBW marketing and outreach.

- Residents of Marcellus
- Residents of Onondaga and Cayuga Counties and the City of Syracuse
- Educators in Onondaga and Cayuga Counties and the City of Syracuse
- Prospective funders, grantors and corporate sponsors
- Residents of Central New York
- Residents of New York State
- Visitors and tourists
- OTHER _____

OBJECTIVES:

7. What are the top three objectives you would like to see prioritized for CNEBW marketing?

- Increase membership.
- Increase visitors.
- Increase program participation and revenues.
- Increase use of facilities and trails.
- Increase funding from members, donors, grantors and sponsors.
- Increase volunteer hours/recruit more volunteers
- Increase reach beyond current populations served.
- Enhance our reputation in the nature center/environmental field.
- Increase our network of alliances with other organizations and entities related to our vision and mission.
- Improve communication and coordination among board, staff and volunteers.
- OTHER (describe) _____

STRATEGIES:

8. What ideas or suggestions do you have for marketing CNEBW that would help accomplish the objectives you prioritized in Question 7 above?

9. Thinking about the marketing CNEBW has done in the past, which programs and promotions do you feel have been most effective and why?

10. What are your expectations for integrated branding and marketing development and implementation? How will you know that the effort has been a success?

Any other comments, questions or suggestions?

Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses. Your input will be used to develop an integrated branding and marketing plan to help CNEBW become more well-known and better able to deliver our important nature education and stewardship messages.

Branding and Marketing Survey for Educators
CENTERS FOR NATURE EDUCATION at BALTIMORE WOODS
August 2007

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

As a first step in developing an integrated branding and marketing plan for the Centers for Nature Education at Baltimore Woods, we would like your input to help guide our efforts. Because educators are a key member of our target audience, your insights are very valuable to us. Please respond to this short survey candidly and provide any additional comments you may have.

1. Compared to other recreational and educational opportunities in your area, what are the key differentiators that set CNEBW apart and make it unique? Please check your top 2.

- Focus on children
 Creative programming
 Hands-on learning experiences
 Coordination with school curricula
 Nature study and recreational options for all ages
 Free hiking and snowshoe use
 Preschool programs
 Nature in the City program

John A. Weeks Interpretive Center

OTHER/Comments _____

2. What are the top three qualities or attributes you believe should be conveyed by the CNEBW brand identity (rank order three, with 1 being most important, etc.)

- Family recreation
 Childhood nature education
 Environmental awareness/stewardship
 Fun/entertainment
 Health/fitness
 Service to the community
 Innovative programming
 Friendly, welcoming
 Professionalism
 OTHER/Comments _____

3. Please indicate your perception of CNEBW's current name and logo (check all that apply):

I think the current name and logo have a great deal of value and recognition and should be retained as is.

___ I think alternative name concepts should be considered as a part of developing a brand strategy.

___ I think alternative logo concepts should be considered as part of developing a brand strategy.

___ I think the addition of an appropriate tagline (give example) could enhance the current name and logo.

___ I think Baltimore Woods (a place) and Centers for Nature Education (a portfolio of on-site and off-site programs) are two fundamentally different entities which could be branded separately.

OTHER/Comments_____

4. Thinking about the programming and marketing CNEBW has done in the past, which programs and promotions do you feel have been most effective and why?

5. What ideas or suggestions do you have for marketing CNEBW that would help more people take advantage of the organization's programs, land and facilities?

Any other comments, questions or suggestions?

Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses. Your input will be used to develop an integrated branding and marketing plan to help CNEBW become more well-known and better able to deliver our important nature education and stewardship messages.

Marketing Planning Questionnaire

Your answers to these questions will inform and accelerate the marketing plan development process. You may complete this questionnaire individually or as a group. If possible, please provide the answers in writing to Bolger + Battle prior to the first meeting. Thank you.

1. **Organization history** – When was your organization founded and by whom? How has the organization evolved re: offerings, member base, reputation? How has your organization grown over the years, both in revenues and in offerings? *What has made you successful in the past?*
2. **Operating philosophy** – What is the primary value you provide to members? What are the key principles that guide your decisions? How do you want people to think of your organization?
3. **Current situation** – What is the biggest challenge you are facing today? What do you see as the biggest opportunity you have in the next 3-5 years? What will it take for you to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities before you? What changes would you like to make in your organization? What new capabilities will you need to develop? What outside help will you need?
4. **Objectives** – What specific goals do you have for your organization in the next three years? How do you expect marketing and communications to impact these goals? How will you measure your desired outcomes?
5. **Positioning and Branding** – If you could have members and prospects believe one thing about your organization, what would it be?
6. **Vision** -- Looking into the future, what do you hope your organization will become? How do you want your members and prospects to think of you in 2020? If your vision is realized, what will they say about you?
7. **Brand Equity** – How well-known is your organization name? Your logo? Do you feel you have a lot invested in these? Has your investment paid off? Do you like your name and logo?
8. **Past marketing efforts** – Have you done any advertising or marketing in the past? If so, what have you done? What kinds of results have you had? Are there specific methods you are interested in investigating as a part of your marketing plan? What types of communications tools do you think your members and prospects are most receptive to?
9. **Target Audiences** – Who are all the groups and individuals that you want to be aware of your organization? Be specific in segmenting your target audiences, e.g. not just “current members,” but members divided into meaningful groups based on their size, their type of business, the type of services you provide to them, etc. For each group, what methods have you found most effective for communicating with them?

Members – Do you have current or past members who are very satisfied with the services you provided? Will these members be willing to provide endorsements or testimonials for your organization? How about unhappy members? What made them unhappy? What did you do or can you do about it?

Marketing and Referral Process – How do prospective members learn about your organization today? What makes them choose your organization? Who makes the final decision? Who influences the decision? What materials or resources do you use to promote membership and other offerings? Are there any prospecting or marketing support tools or methods you are specifically interested in?

Staff – How do you communicate with staff and volunteers? What do you communicate with them about? How do staff members communicate with members and prospects? What improvements would you like to see in the quality of communications between board and staff? And between staff and members?